**OP-ED: State must increase funding to grow UC enrollment by 20,000**

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by Daniel Hare and James A. Chalfant

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As University of California professors, we are heartened by efforts to enroll thousands of additional students at UC campuses but concerned that quality, timely graduation and access to classes might be sacrificed for the sake of rapid enrollment growth.

The current UC plan is to enroll 5,000 more California undergraduates for the coming academic year than were enrolled last year, and an additional 5,000 over the following two years, a total bump of 10,000 students by 2018-19.

This week, state Senate and Assembly members engaged in budget-conference committee negotiations about different proposals to increase enrollment of Californians by thousands more students than UC’s current goals.

If legislators and the governor ultimately reach agreement on how to support expanded access for Californians to a UC education, they must also ensure there is funding to pay for it. The ingredients for student success and timely graduation require that the state invest at least $10,000 per student — the state’s historical share of the $24,000 annual cost of educating a UC student.

Some suggest that UC simply admit fewer nonresidents to provide more access to residents. When a nonresident doesn’t occupy a classroom seat, such proponents argue, that translates to one more seat for a Californian. But that logic is flawed.

The primary reason UC’s ability to increase access for residents has been limited is because the state has not been funding its share; the best way to expand access for Californians is for the state to pay its share of that cost. UC enrolls nonresidents only after it has met its commitment to enrolling eligible and funded California students.

Whether enrollment grows by 10,000 over the next three years or by 20,000, as some legislators have proposed, UC campuses will face serious challenges.

Think of it this way: 10,000 students are the equivalent of half of a good-size campus. With 20,000 more students, we would need a full-campus worth of faculty, with offices and labs to house them, and staff to provide support related to dorms, to food and health care services, to advising on timely progress toward degrees, and to campus safety.

Simply calling on UC to lower salaries or other costs doesn’t solve the problem of how to do so without lowering quality. And it is UC’s quality that makes access worth having.

As faculty members, we see our staff stretched thin even now. Following budget cut after budget cut, staff have been asked to find ways to do more with less, and many put in far more hours than they are paid to provide. Asking still more of an already overtaxed staff will not serve anyone well.

There is a lot at stake, for future generations as well as the current one.

The University of California has high graduation rates compared with other public universities.

The average time to degree is four years and one quarter. More than 80 percent of UC students graduate within five years, and more than 85 percent in six years. Such a high standard will be impossible to maintain without adequate support.

Graduation rates matter not only to the students who earn degrees, but also to those aspiring to a UC education — and to the future economic health of the state. The Public Policy Institute of California has warned that California will fall at least a million college degrees short of economic demand by 2030, if current trends continue.

When students graduate in a timely manner, it means others can be admitted. If class offerings and support services can’t keep pace with enrollment increases, fewer students will graduate each year. That’s frustrating, and expensive.

All UC students will suffer the consequences of declining quality if there is enrollment growth without adequate funding.